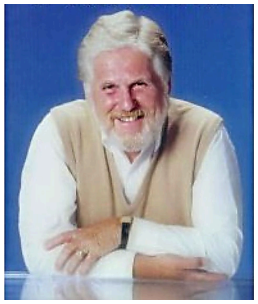
Power Evangelism

by John Wimber



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***Renewal Journal 10: Evangelism* – PDF**

Pastor John Wimber, founder and International Director of the Association of Vineyard Churches, was an international conference speaker, inspiring worship song-writer, best-selling author and spiritual leader to the Vineyard congregations. He was also known as a pivotal voice in the arenas of spiritual formation and renewal.

John Wimber expressed and demonstrated for hundreds of thousands of us a strong, biblical grasp of evangelism in the power of the Spirit as an essential and integral part of the Kingdom of God, now breaking into the kingdoms of this world, but yet to be consummated at the coming of the King.

These edited comments are selected from John Wimber's pioneering class notes of 1983-84 in the popular and controversial course 'MC510' at Fuller Theological Seminary on signs and wonders and church growth. That course provided material which John Wimber and Kevin Springer then adapted for their best-selling books, *Power Evangelism* and *Power Healing.*

Evangelism is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God

in the fulness of its blessings and promise

Evangelism is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God in the fulness of its blessings and promise, which has also been called 'salvation'.

Jesus did more than preach the Kingdom. He demonstrated its reality with 'signs of the Kingdom', public evidence that the Kingdom he was talking about had come. We believe that signs should validate our evangelism, too.

Since 'the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work' (1 John 3:8), he inevitably came into collision with the prince of darkness. The signs of the Kingdom were evidences that the devil was retreating before the advance of the King. As Jesus put it, once the strong man has been overpowered by the Stronger One, his possessions can be taken from him (Matthew 12:29; Luke 11:22).

Signs of the Kingdom

The signs of the Kingdom reflect this. We list them in approximately the order in which they appeared, although this is not necessarily in order of importance.

1. The first sign of the Kingdom was, and still is, ***Jesus himself*** in the midst of his people (Luke 17:21; Matthew 18:20), whose presence brings joy, peace, and a sense of celebration (John 5:11; 16:33; Mark 2:18-20).

2. The second is the ***preaching of the gospel.*** There was no gospel of the Kingdom to proclaim until Christ arrived. Now, however, that he has come, the Good News of the Kingdom must be preached to all, especially to the poor (Luke 4:18-19; 7:22). The preaching of the Kingdom points people to the Kingdom itself.

3. The third sign of the Kingdom is ***exorcism.*** Evil powers are expelled. We refuse to demythologize the teachings of Jesus and his apostles about demons. Although the 'principalities and powers' may have a reference to demonic ideologies and structures, we believe that they certainly are evil, personal intelligences under the command of the devil. Demon possession, and influence, is a real and terrible condition. Deliverance is possible only in a power encounter in which the name of Jesus is invoked and prevails.

4. The fourth sign of the Kingdom was the ***healing and the nature miracles –*** making the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the sick whole, raising the dean (Luke 7:22), stilling the storm, and multiplying the loaves and fishes. We all agree that these were not only signs pointing to the reality of the Kingdom's arrival, but also anticipations of the final Kingdom from which all disease, hunger, disorder, and death will be banished forever. We also agree that God is still free and powerful and performs miracles today, especially in frontier situations where the Kingdom is advancing into enemy-held territory. Some of us think we should expect miracles as commonly as in the ministry of Jesus and his apostles (e.g.

John 14:12), while others draw attention to the texts which describe these miracles as authenticating their unique ministry (e.g. Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

5. A fifth sign of the Kingdom is the miracle of ***conversion and the new birth.*** Whenever people 'turn to God from idols, to serve the living and true God' (1 Thessalonians 1:9,10), a power encounter has taken place in which the spell of idols, whether traditional modern, and of the spirits has been broken. God's power for salvation is displayed in the gospel (Romans 1:16), and converts who have been rescued from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18) are said to have 'tasted … the powers of the age to come' (Hebrews 6:5).

6. A sixth sign of the Kingdom is ***the people of the Kingdom*** in whom is manifested that cluster of Christ-like qualities which Paul called 'the fruit of the Spirit'. For the gift of the Spirit is the supreme blessing of the Kingdom of God. Where he rules, love, joy, peace, and righteousness rule with him (Galatians 5:22-23; Romans 14:17). Moreover, love issues in good works. Thus, if the gospel is Good News of the Kingdom, good works are the signs of the Kingdom. Good news and good works, evangelism and social responsibility, once again are seen to be indissolubly united.

7. The seventh sign of the Kingdom, we suggest, is ***suffering.*** It was necessary for the King to suffer in order to enter into his glory. Indeed, he suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21). To suffer for the sake of righteousness or for our testimony to Jesus, and to bear such suffering courageously, is a clear sign to all beholders that we have received God's salvation or Kingdom (Philippians 1:28-29; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:5).

Kingdom principles

Evangelism involves the proclamation and demonstration of God's reign, the Kingdom of God on the earth. The ministry of Jesus in signs and wonders was based on his relationship with the Holy Spirit who is creative, imaginative and inventive. Therefore, we should not try to reduce the ministry of Jesus to a group of simplistic techniques or formulas for the purpose of developing a healing ministry.

The Kingdom of God brings the reign of God into all of life, making all things whole. Healing demonstrates God's reign. The following points are some key principles for Jesus' healing work.

1. Jesus began healing *after* his baptism and anointing by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21, 22; 4:1-19).

2. Jesus delivered *all who came to him* from every kind of sickness (Matthew 8:16; 15:30-31; 17:14-21; Mark 7:31-37; John 11:43-44).

3. The Gospel writers frequently note that Jesus' healing works were motivated by compassion and pity for the sick (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 20:34).

4. Jesus seemed to be more able to heal in the presence of faith in him and in his power to heal (Matthew 8:5-13; 9:2, 27-31; Mark 5:24-43; 9:14-29; Luke 4:23-28).

5. Jesus sometimes healed when he alone believed, but he was clearly limited by an unbelieving (negative faith) atmosphere (Mark 6:1-6; 8:22; Luke 4:23-28).

6. Jesus seems to have healed at all times, but as he flowed with the Spirit, he was apparently aware of times when the Spirit was especially ready to move in power (e.g. 'power of the Lord present to heal' – Luke 5:17).

7. Jesus was *always willing* to heal those who came to him with faith (Matthew 8:1-4, 5-13; Mark 7:24-30).

8. Frequently the Lord would heal many people, one after another, in large meetings or gatherings (Matthew 3:23-25; 14:13-14; 15:30-31).

9. Jesus did not do miracles for those who only wanted to test him or to be entertained (e.g. the scribes and Pharisees, Matthew 12:38-42).

10. Resistance on any grounds to healing the needy grieved Jesus (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17).

11. Our Lord used many patterns and methods in healing (Matthew 8:15-13; 14:34-36; Mark 7:31-37; 8:22-26; Luke 5:12-26; 6:6-10; 7:11-17; 8:42-48; John 9:1-41; 11:41-42).

12. Jesus most often healed in public, though sometimes he withdrew, especially in negative environments, to heal privately (Mark 5:35-43; 8:22-26; Luke 4:38-39).

13. Jesus often asked questions about the need for healing, indicating that

(a) while he sometimes received words of knowledge, other times he did not, and

(b) he wanted his focus exactly on target (Mark 5:1-13; 8:22-26; 9:14-29; 10:46-52).

14. Our Lord did not necessarily always equate sin and sickness (John 5:9-18; 9:1-3).

15. Sometimes Jesus had to pray *more than once* for the person in need to be healed (e.g. the blind man of Bethsaida – Mark 8:22-26) or had to continue to pray (e.g. Gerasene demoniac).

16. Jesus frequently delivered the demonized and healed them of related effects using various patterns (Matthew 12: 43-45; Mark 5:1-13; Luke 4:31-37, 40-41).

17. Very strong warnings were issued by Jesus against labelling healing in his name and by his Spirit as demonic in origin. Such words would blaspheme the Spirit and could move him to permanent wrath (Mark 3:19-30).

18. What Jesus saw the Father doing, he likewise did (John 5:19).

Kingdom authority

Through Jesus, the sinless Son of God, the authority or reign which was lost through our sin has been re-established for all who submit to God's grace and reign through faith in Jesus. These points outline the significance of Kingdom authority restored through Jesus.

1. Authority and power are often confused.

(a) Power (Greek *dunamis*) is might or ability, both inherent and spontaneous. It is often used for the word 'miracle' (i.e. a 'work of power' – Mark 6:5).

(b) Authority (Greek *exousia*) is the freedom and right to act (i.e. the right to exercise that power). *Exousia* can be delegated.

2. God has absolute authority; he is almighty (Luke 12:5; 1:51-52; Romans 13:1-6; Matthew 20:25-26).

3. Through creation God gave mankind relationship, identity, and position with himself. This gave us authority (Genesis 1;26-27; CF. Psalm 8:3-4, 6-8).

4. Through deception and sin, mankind was deposed and lost authority, and Satan became the prince, ruler and god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 8:34, 44; Luke 4:6).

5. Jesus was sent, as a man (the second Adam) to re-establish God's authority over the earth by disarming all powers and saving mankind out from under their authority (Luke 4:14-18; John 17:2; cf. 3:35; Matthew 7:29; 8:9; 9:6,8; 28:18; cf.

Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 1:22, 27; 4:39, 41; Luke 7:1-17; John 12:31; Hebrews 2:14; Ephesians 1:20-23).

6. Having deposed Satan, Jesus reinstated those who he has brought into relationship with God through faith in him, and thereby gives us authority:

a. to proclaim the good news, 'Our God reigns!'

b. to baptize and teach

c. to drive out demons

d. to heal the sick

e. to speak in new tongues

f. to rise the dead

g. to disciple the nations

h. to represent Jesus (saviour) to the world

(Matthew 10:8; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-21; John 20:21; also 1 John 3:1; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:4-6; Luke 10:19; Acts 1:8).

7. The authority to heal is exercised and released through certain premises. The neglect of the following premises results in a lack of authority:

a. relationship with God

b. faith in what God says and who Jesus is

c. obedience to his Spirit

d. submissive attitude

e. having a servant's heart

f. faithful stewardship

g. speaking the word of the Kingdom.

Kingdom evangelism

The Church should announce and demonstrate the Kingdom of God. Kingdom evangelism involves power evangelism: that means evangelism that transcends the rational through the demonstration of God's power in signs and wonders and introduces the numinous of God. This involves a presentation of the good news of God's reign accompanied with the manifest presence of God. Power evangelism is spontaneous and is directed by the Holy Spirit. The result is often explosive church growth.

In an interview in *Christianity Today,* "Springtime for the Church in China," June 18, 1982, David Adney answers this question: "How do Christians witness and evangelise [in China]?"

The most basic form of evangelism is through personal friendships in which the gospel is shared with relatives and neighbours. The testimony of answered prayer, especially in healing the sick, has led many to faith in Christ. In one of the large labour camps, a demented woman, whom no doctor or psychiatrist had been able to help, was placed in the same room with a Christian sister. As a result of the Christian's loving care and prayer the woman was completely healed. The whole camp realized that a living God had acted.

In one area where there were 4,000 Christians before the revolution, the number has now increased to 90,000 with a thousand meetings places. Christians in that region give three reasons for the rapid increase:

the faithful witness of Christians in the midst of suffering,

the power of God seen in healing the sick, and

the influence of Christian radio broadcasts from outside.

Power evangelism is that gospel presentation which is both rational and transcends the rational; it comes with the demonstration of the power of God, with signs and wonders and introduces the numinous of God.

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